

Priests, again—it is from their arrogant ranks
 that Anti-
 christ in person recruits his lifeguards. When
 he besieges
 Conscience in the Castle of Unity, and Sloth his
 lieutenant
 heads the assault, not at all slothfully (for
 Allegory, alas,
 is a lame lady in such details), then—
 Proude prestos come with hym • moo (more) than a
 thousand,
 In paltokes (jackets) and pyked (peaked) shoes * and
 pisseres (soldiers')
 longefcnyves.

And as for holy hermits:

Heremites on an heep • with hoked staues
 Wenten to Walsingham * and here (their) wenches
 after;
 Crete lobyas (lubbers) and longe • that loth were to
 swynke (work),
 Clotheden hem (themselves) in copis • to ben
 knowen fram othere;
 And shopen hem (made themselves) heremites •
 here (their) ese to
 haue.

Even worse fare the friars, with their Yatte
 chekus'.

Hatred for them starts up at every turn. In
 the middle of
 a mention of the Nativity at Bethlehem, like
 a ferocious
 laugh, comes the author's interjection:

If any frere were founde there • I gif the (thee)
 fyve shillynges.

A little hard to expect them to be there
 before they even
 existed! But no matter; a good time is
 coming when they
 shall exist no longer:

And thanne shal the abbot of Abyndoun - and alle his
 issu for evere
 Haue a knokke of a kynge • and incurable the
 wounde.

Naturally such a prediction made reformers
 like Bishop
 Bale rub their astonished eyes, when nearly
 two centuries
 later Henry VIII fill-filled it to the letter—
 prophetic
 plura praedixit quae nostris diebus impleri
 vidimus; while
 even Warton in the eighteenth century
 wondered for a

moment, he tells us, if it were not some later interpolation.

But of course this is no isolated utterance, either in the poet or in his period. For him, as for Dante, the gift of temporal power to the Papacy, supposed to have been made by Constantine and only later proved by Renaissance